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Facts, Hacks and Turbines: Media Analysis of Irish Wind Energy

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Facts, Hacks and Turbines: Media Analysis of Irish Wind Energy

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Association of American Geographers, San Francisco 1st April 2016

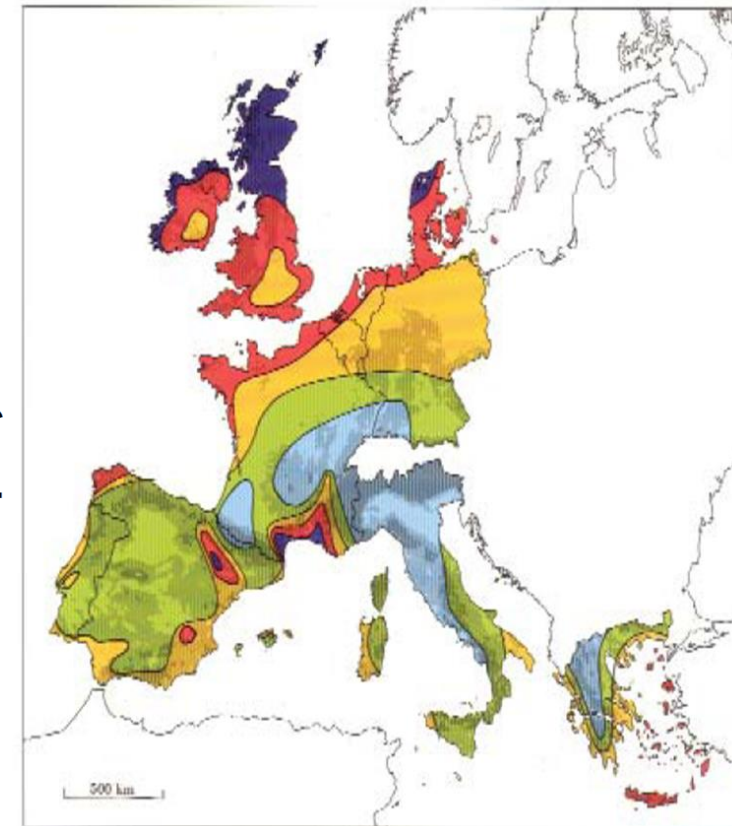
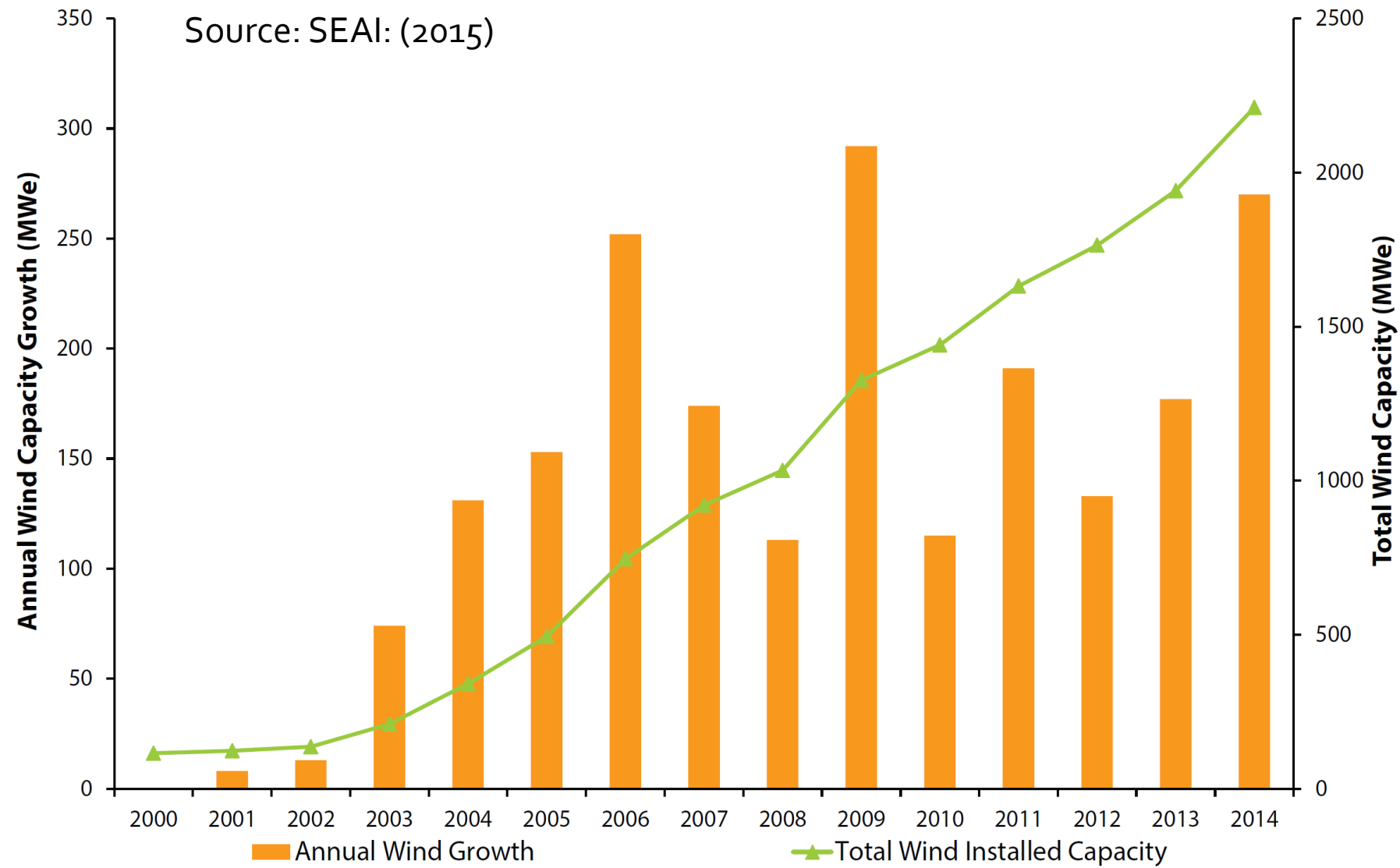
Project funded by the SEAI RD&D Programme



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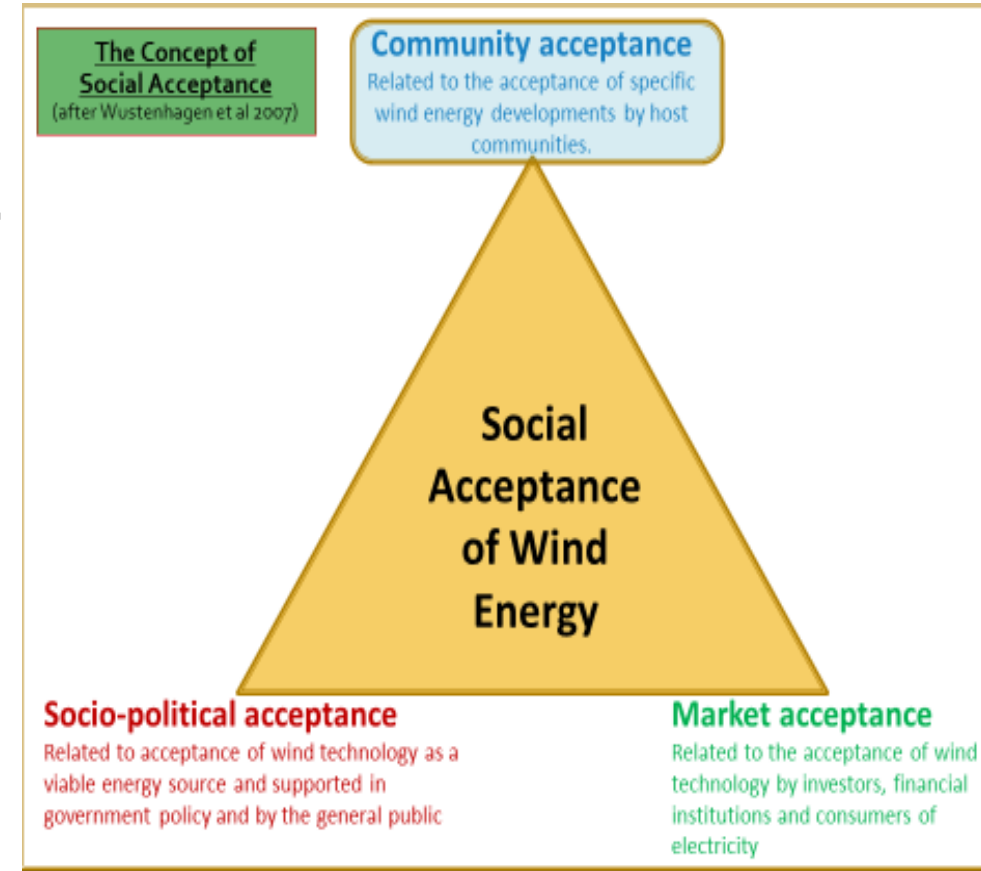
Wind Energy in Ireland



Source: UK Sustainable Development Commission, 2005

Social Acceptance challenges for wind energy

- Community acceptance generally seen to be driven by:
 - Perceived health and environmental impacts;
 - Fairness of decision-making process
 - Perceived distribution of costs and benefits
- Social representation of these issues and their interpretation in specific social contexts.



The social framing of wind energy

- The attitude-behaviour gap and framing of NIMBY 'deviancy'.
- Issues of scale, place, process, actor involvement all influence the discourse and meaning of 'wind energy'.
- The multiple representations of wind energy and its shaping of the public's response to place-specific developments.
- The dynamic of social representations and discourses as wind developments increase, change in scale and occupy new spaces

The media and public perception

- The media play a key role in (re)producing, validating and transforming dominant discourses, meanings and truth claims
- The media's place in the social-technological system of energy
- Media portrayal influenced by journalistic norms, perceptions of news worthiness, broader political economy of the media etc...
- Media received and interpreted in terms of existing worldviews, immediate concerns etc ...
- Increasing complexity of media and role of the print outlets



Methodological approach [1]

- Sample of three key newspapers 2000-2015:

- Irish Times (circulation 93k)
- Irish Independent (circulation 126k)
- Irish Examiner (circulation 40k)

THE IRISH TIMES
Irish Independent 

 **Irish Examiner**

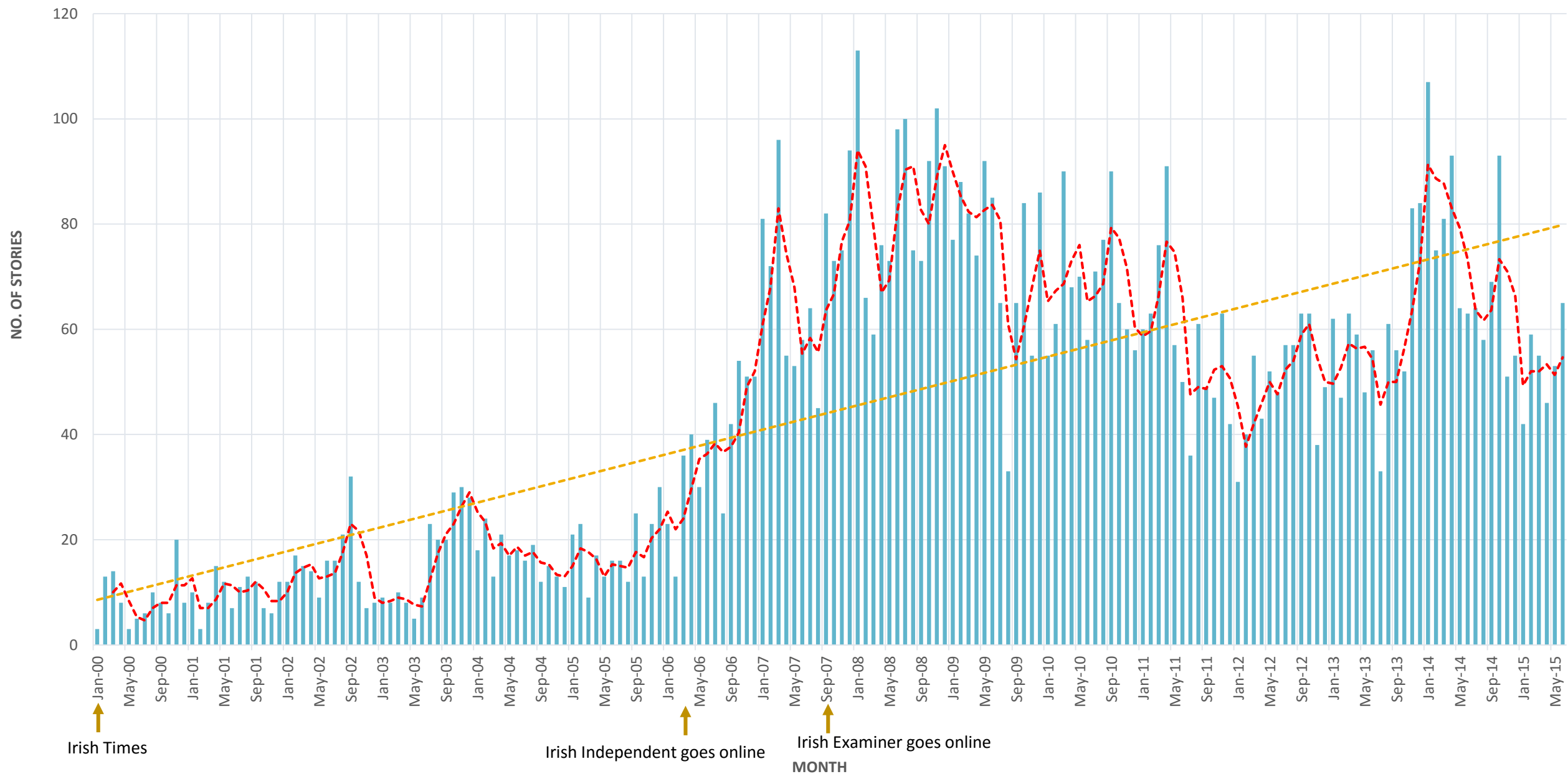
- Sampling:

- 12 search terms using Nexis UK (wind energy, wind power etc) = 19894 articles
- Cleaning, relevancy and removal of duplications = 8224 articles

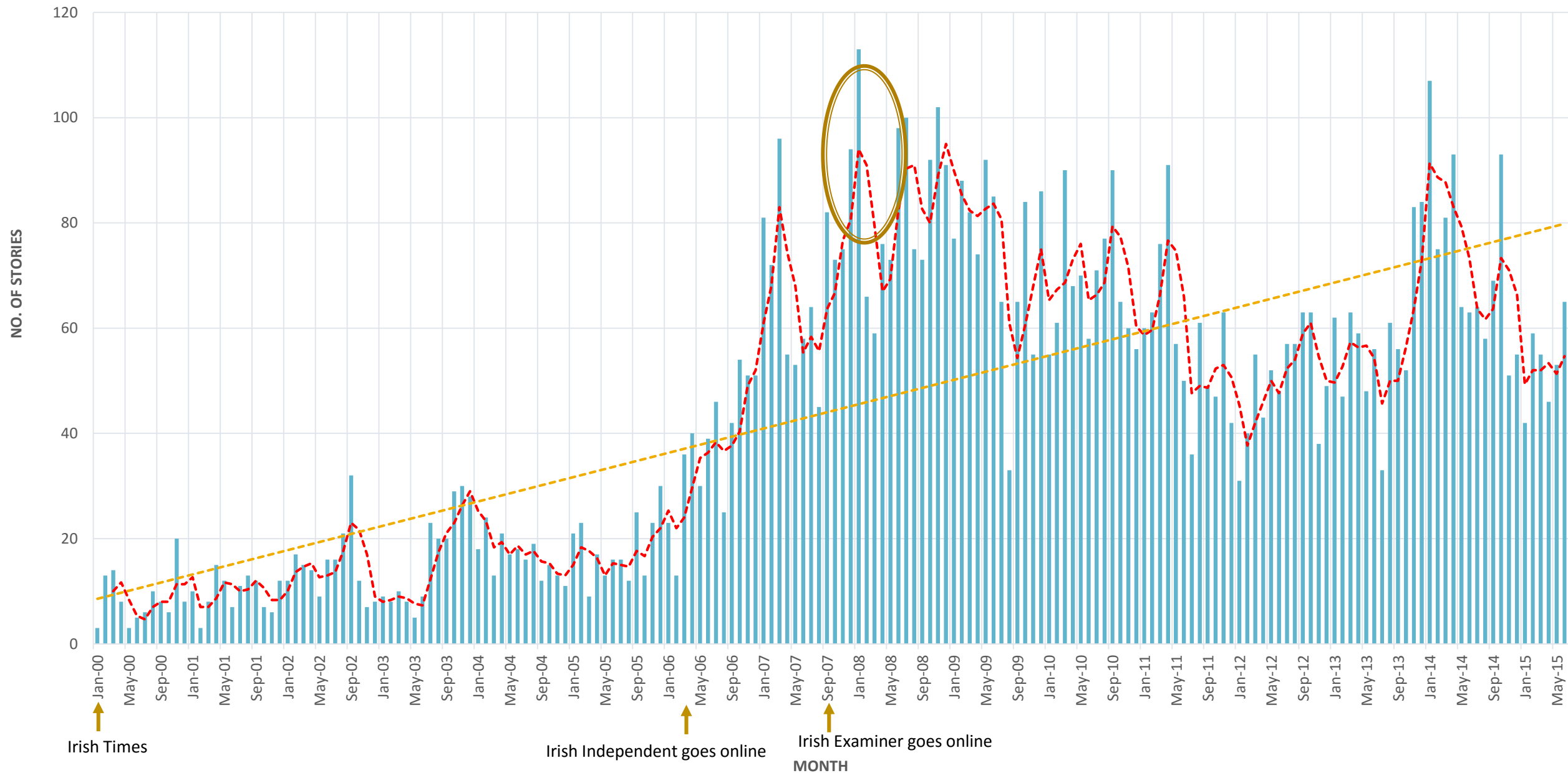
Methodological approach [2]

- Descriptive statistics
- Content analysis using 35 key terms on sample (1 in 6 articles):
 - Historical diachronic (time)
 - Comparative synchronic (difference between papers)
- Qualitative content analysis of 200 articles (1 in 35) from 2007-2015, using *Atlas.ti*
- Coding of 282 articles taken from peak media activity (Nov 2007-Jan 2008)

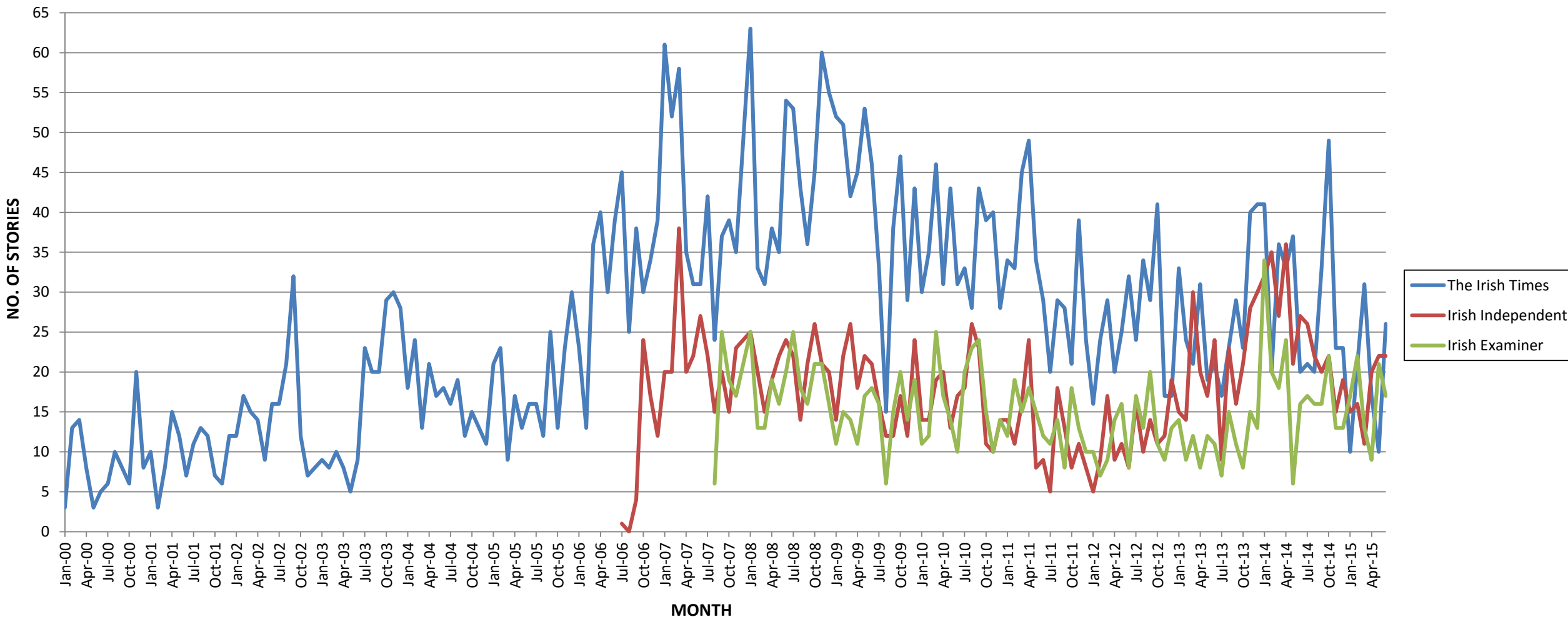
ALL PAPERS: Total stories by month, January 2000-June 2015



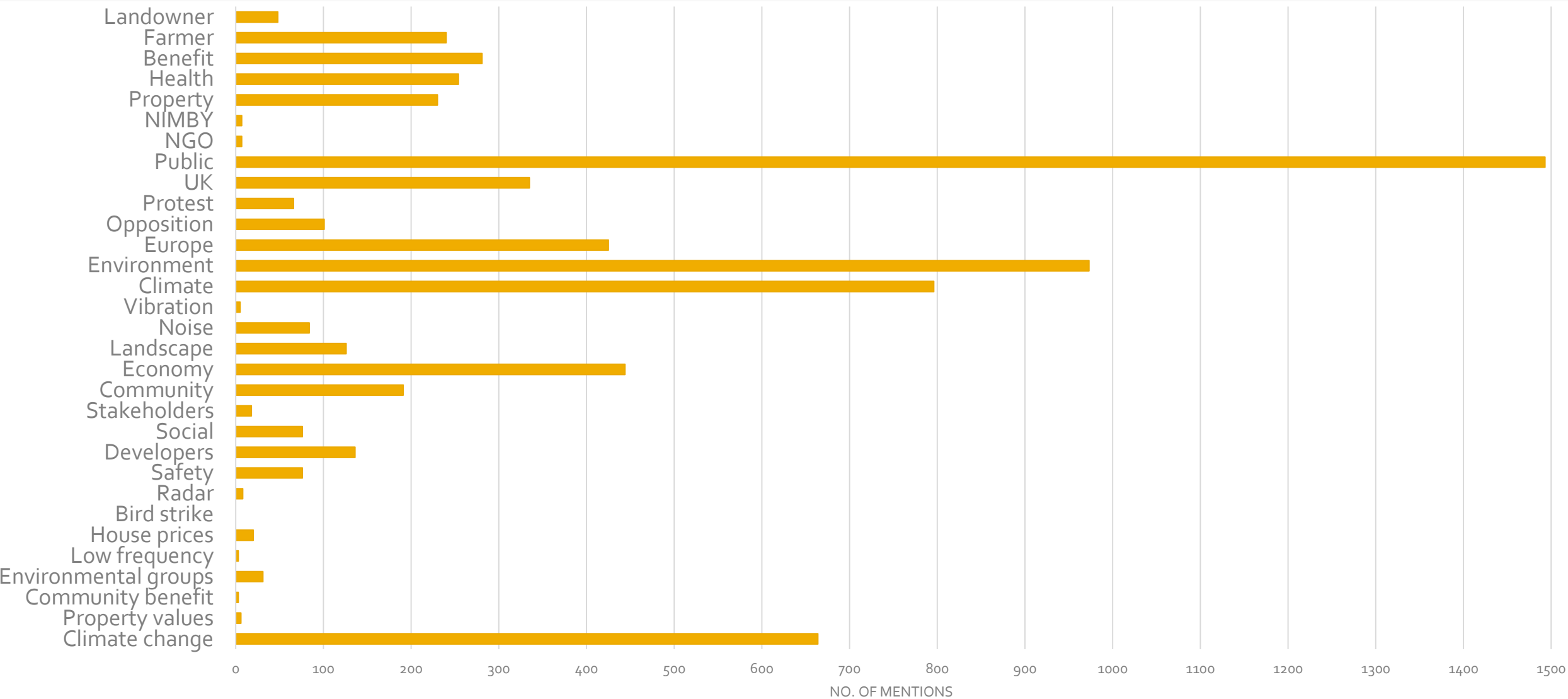
ALL PAPERS: Total stories by month, January 2000-June 2015



Total stories in three Irish newspapers by month

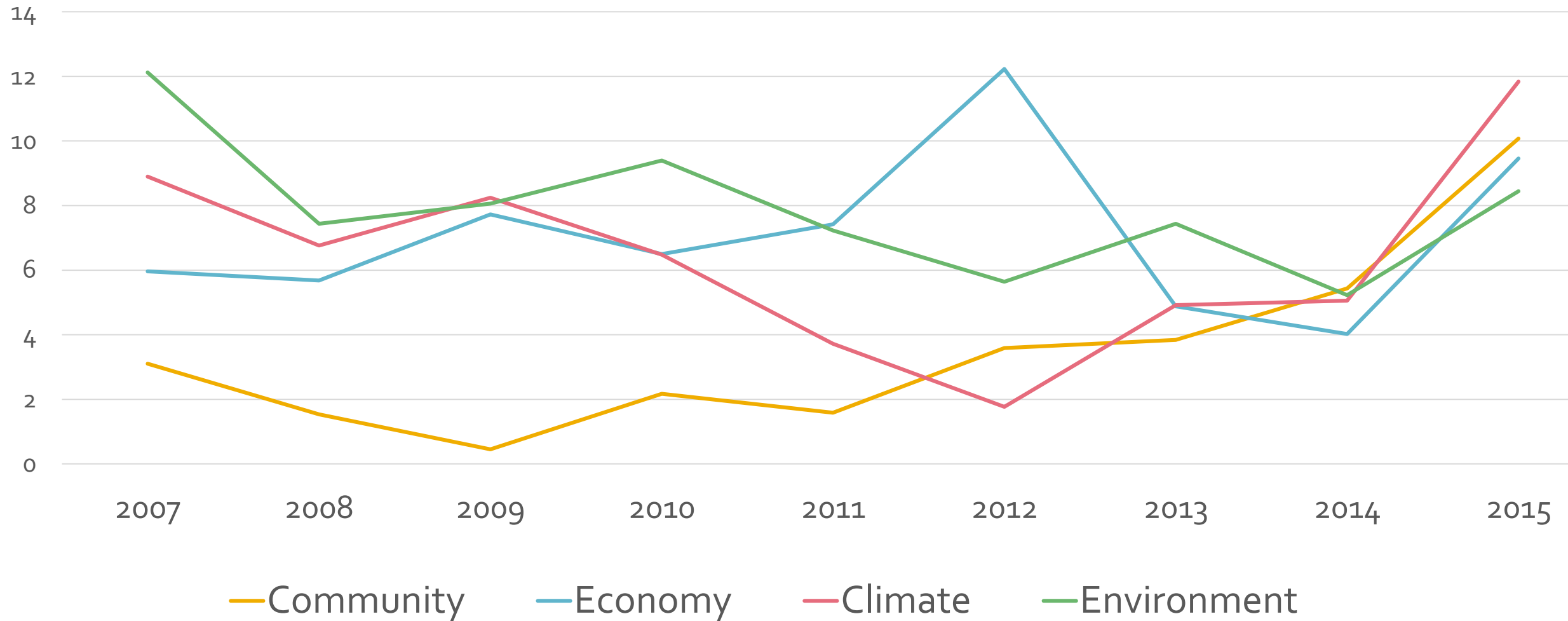


Content analysis results for three Irish newspapers (2006-2015, 1 in 6 sample)



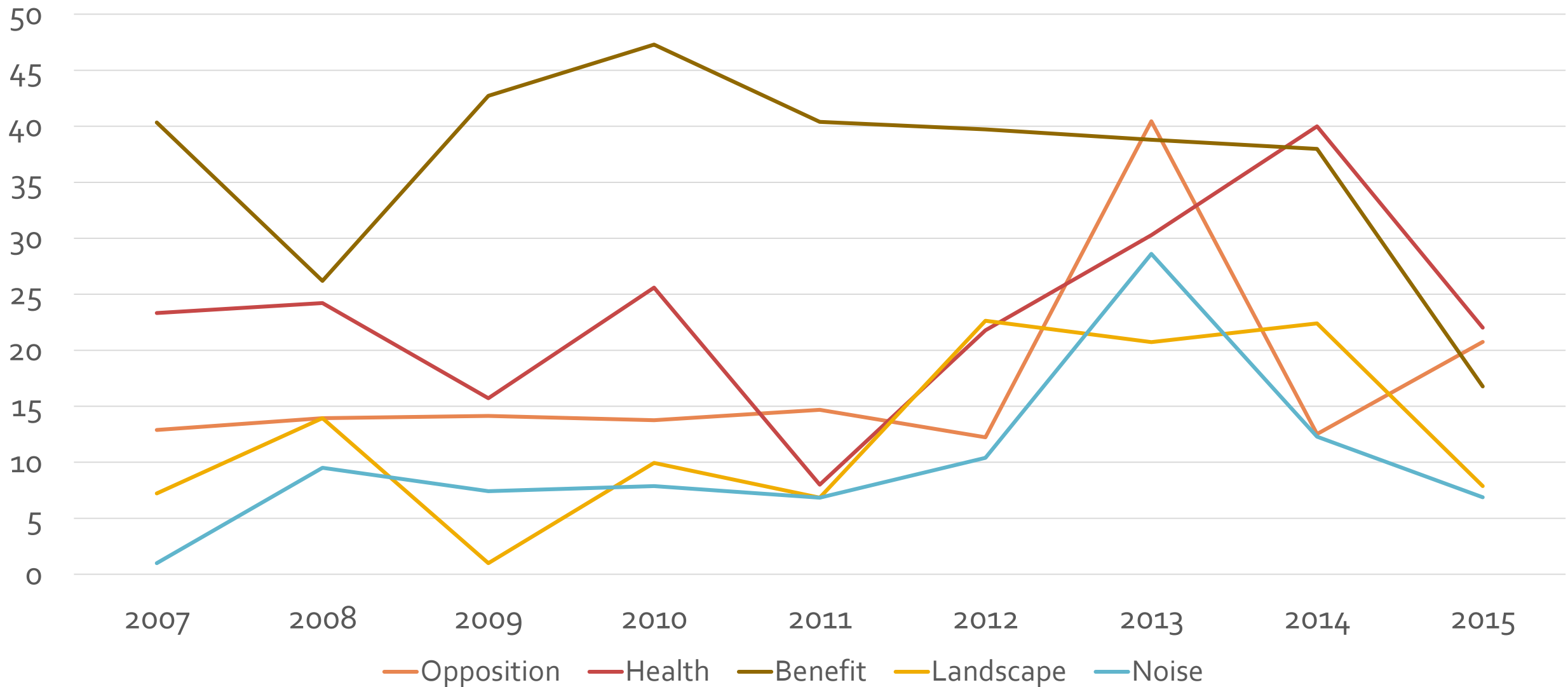
Coding results of selected items from 3 Irish newspapers

(2007 – 2015, 1 in 6 sample) % of articles mentioning items



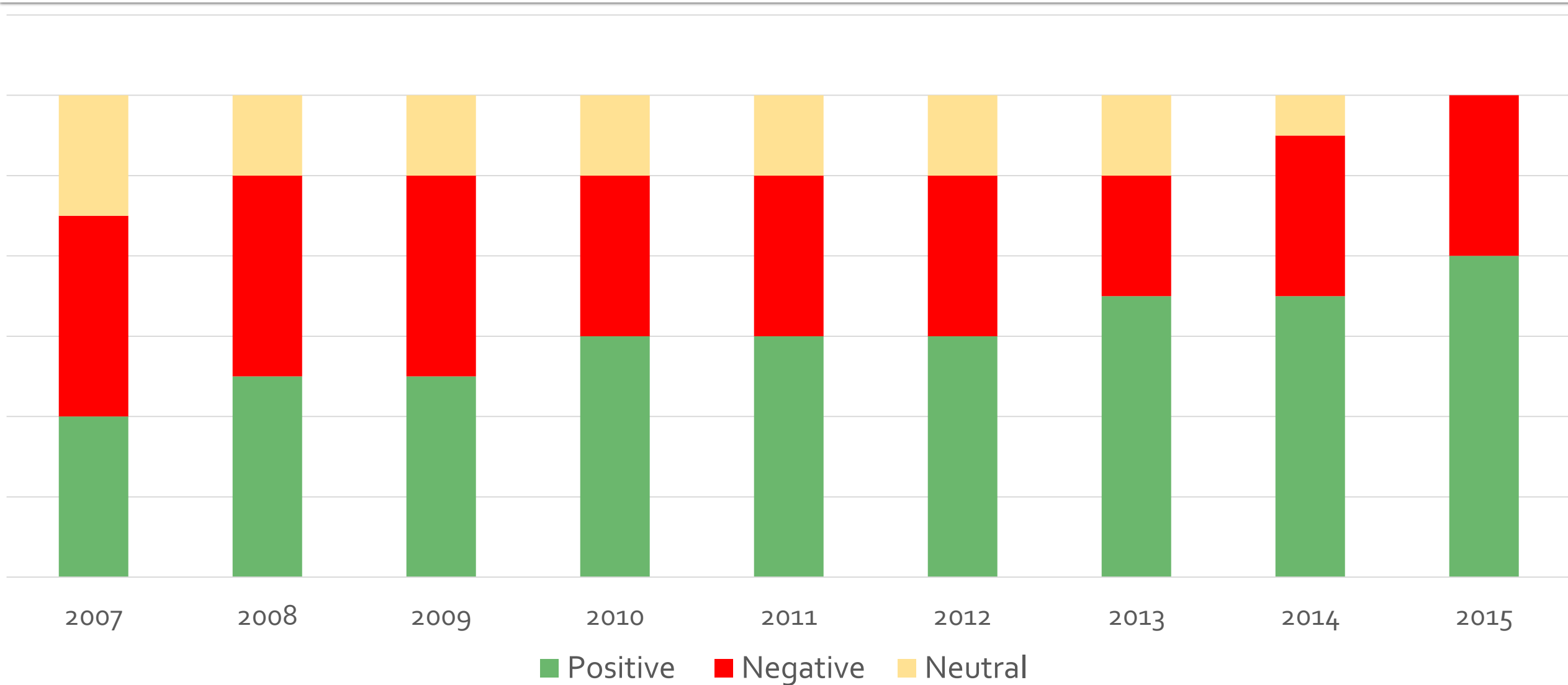
Coding results of selected items from 3 Irish newspapers

(2007 – 2015, 1 in 6 sample)

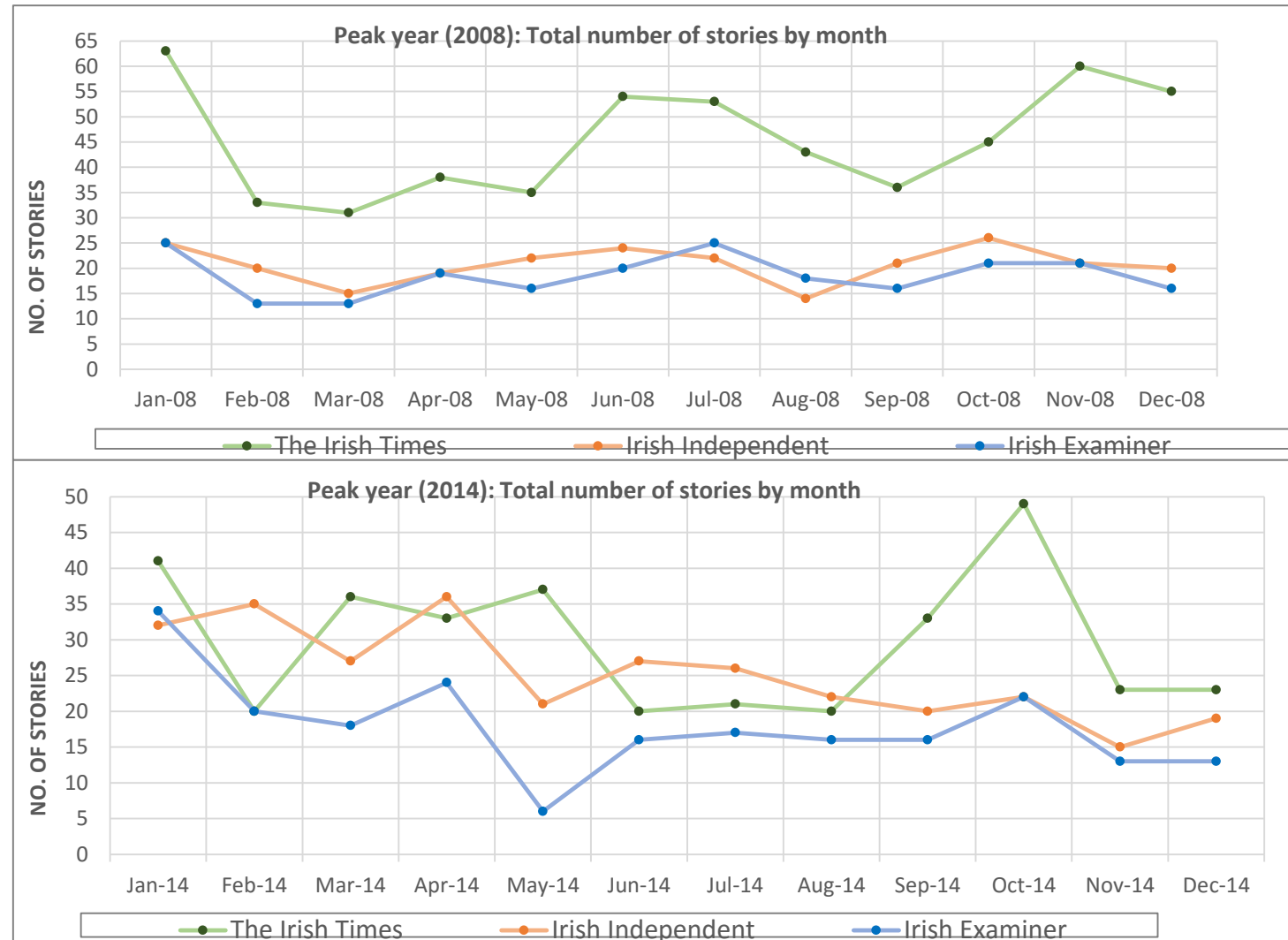
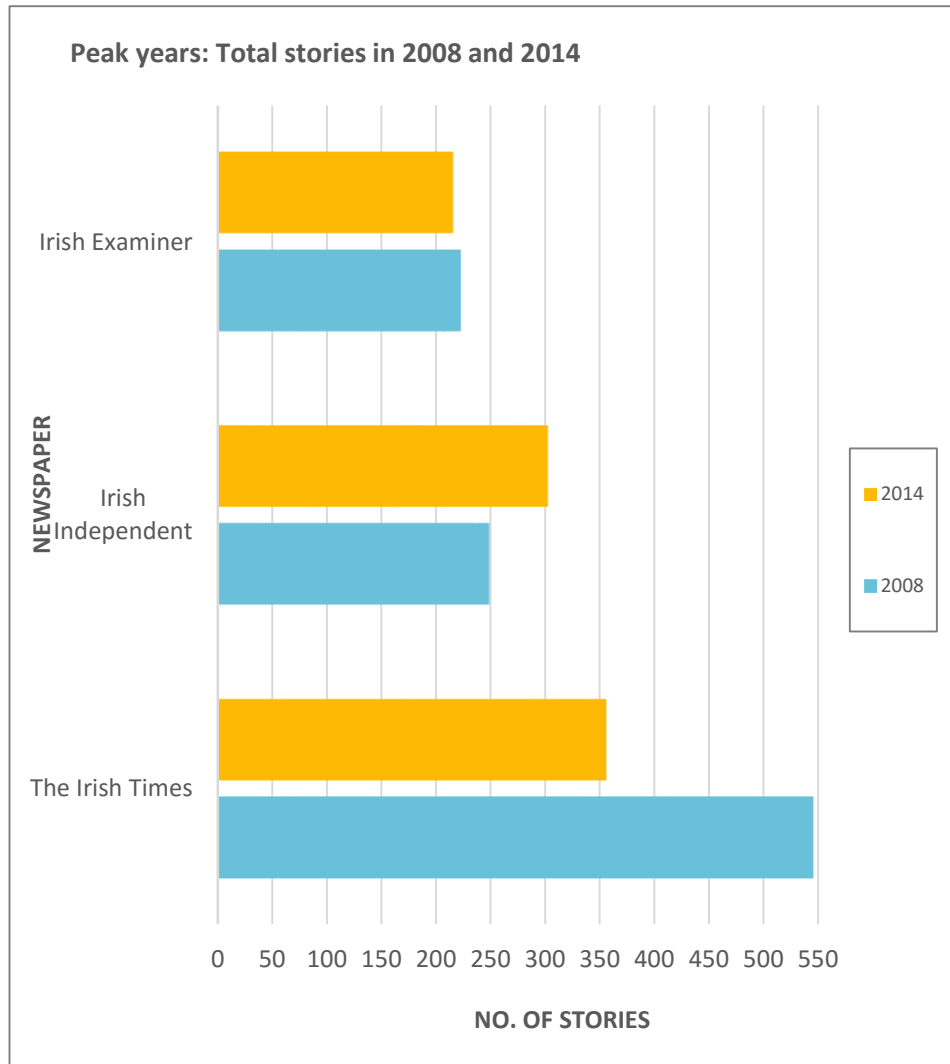


Overall Discourse: positive, negative or neutral

(2007-2015 sample)

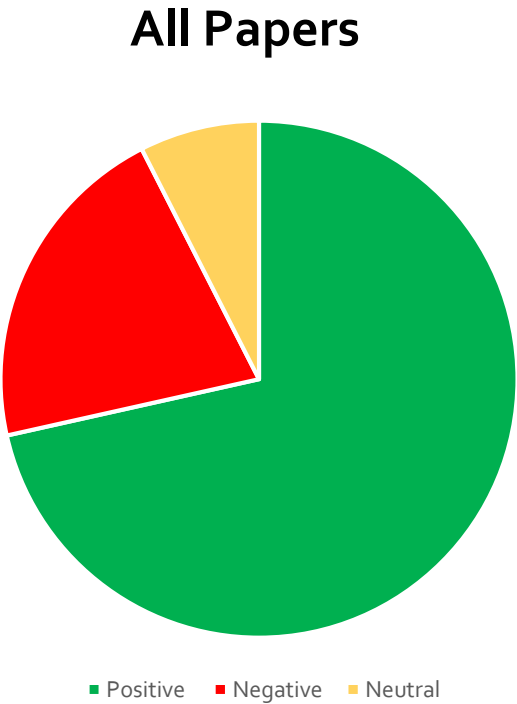
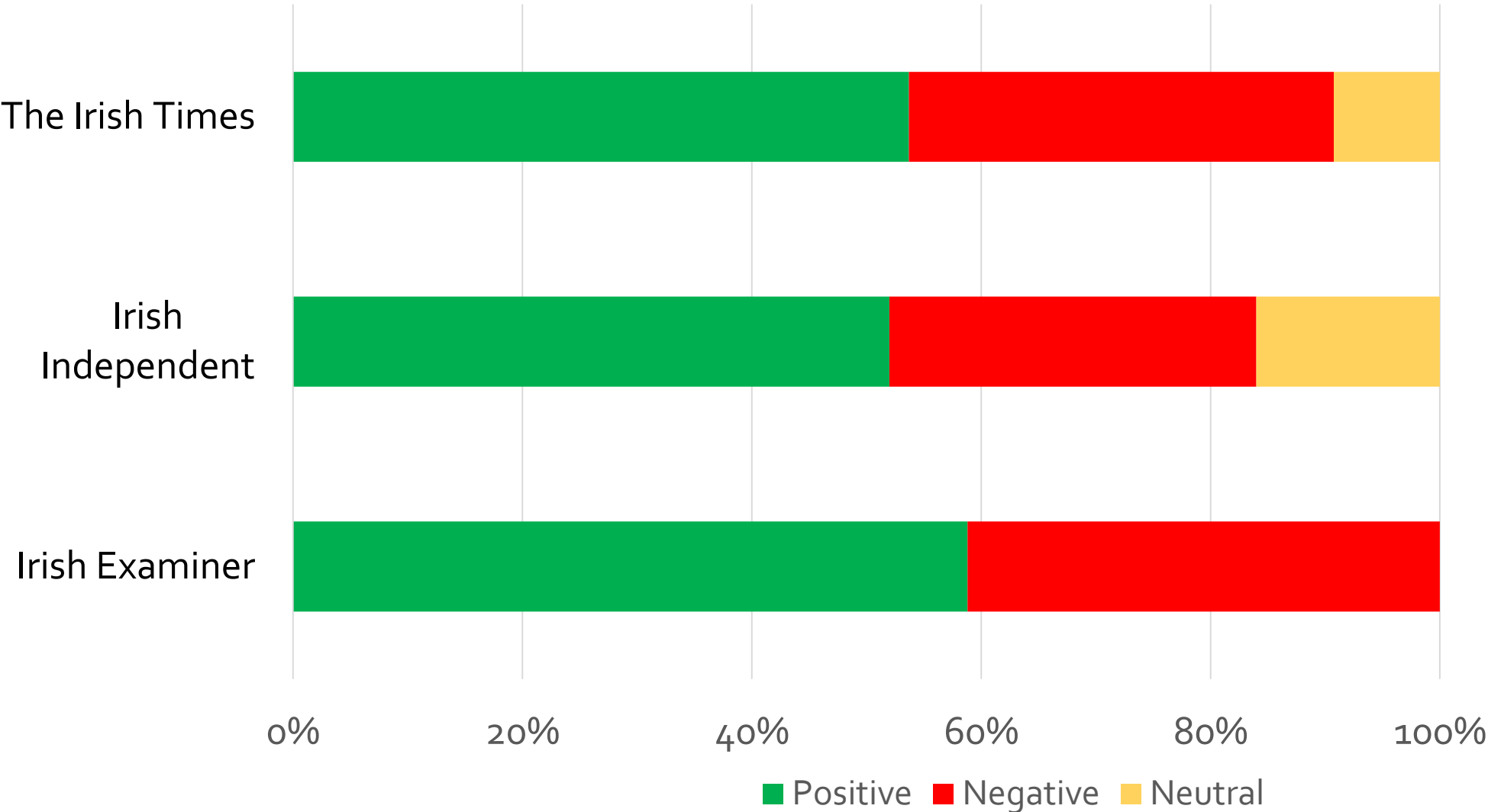


Peaks in coverage



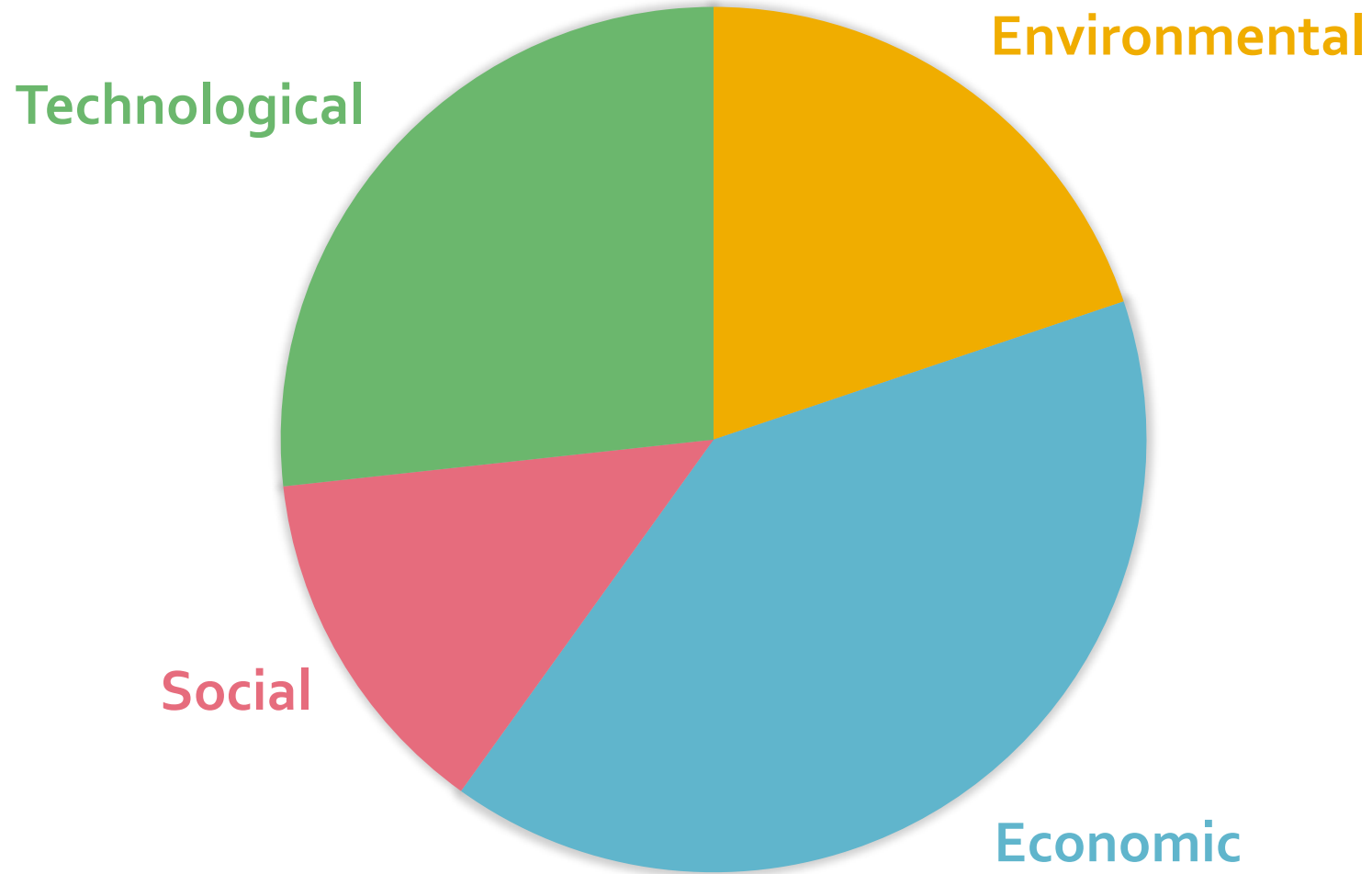
Overall discourse: positive, negative or neutral

(n.200, Nov 2007 - Jan 2008)



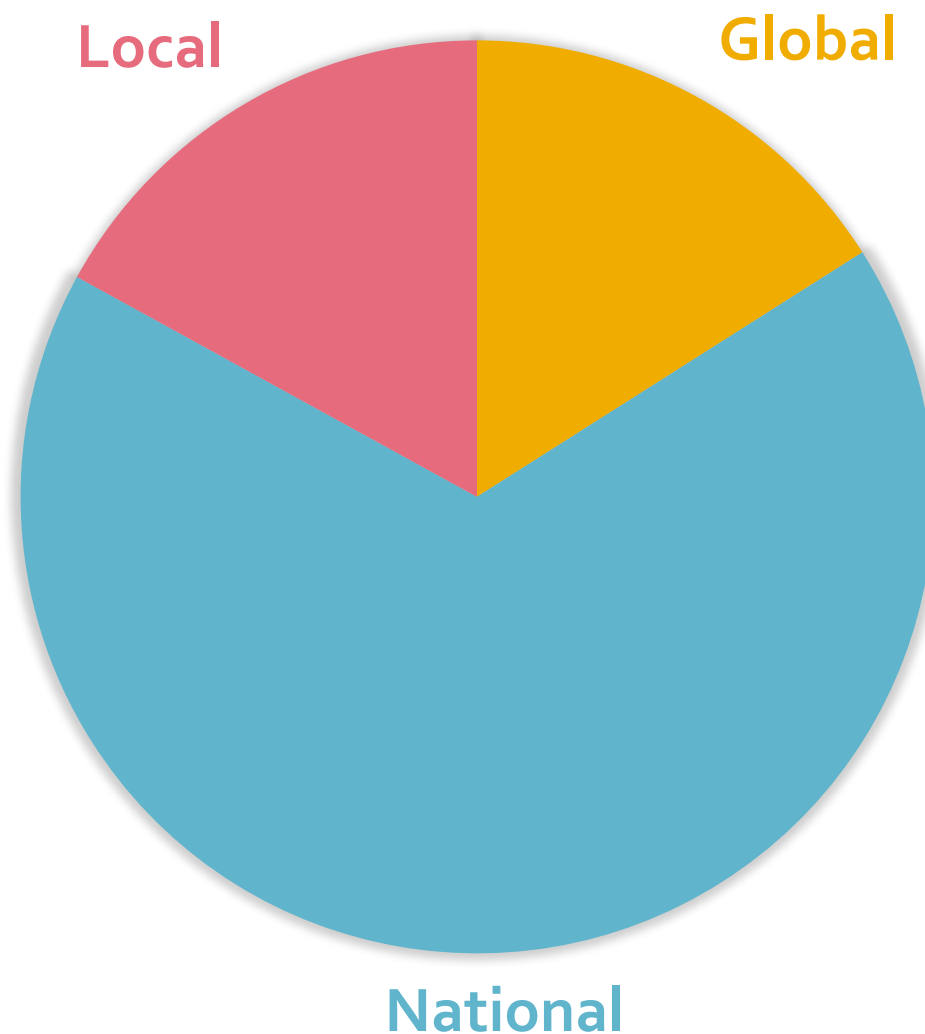
Dominant framings

(n.200, Nov 2007 - Jan 2008)



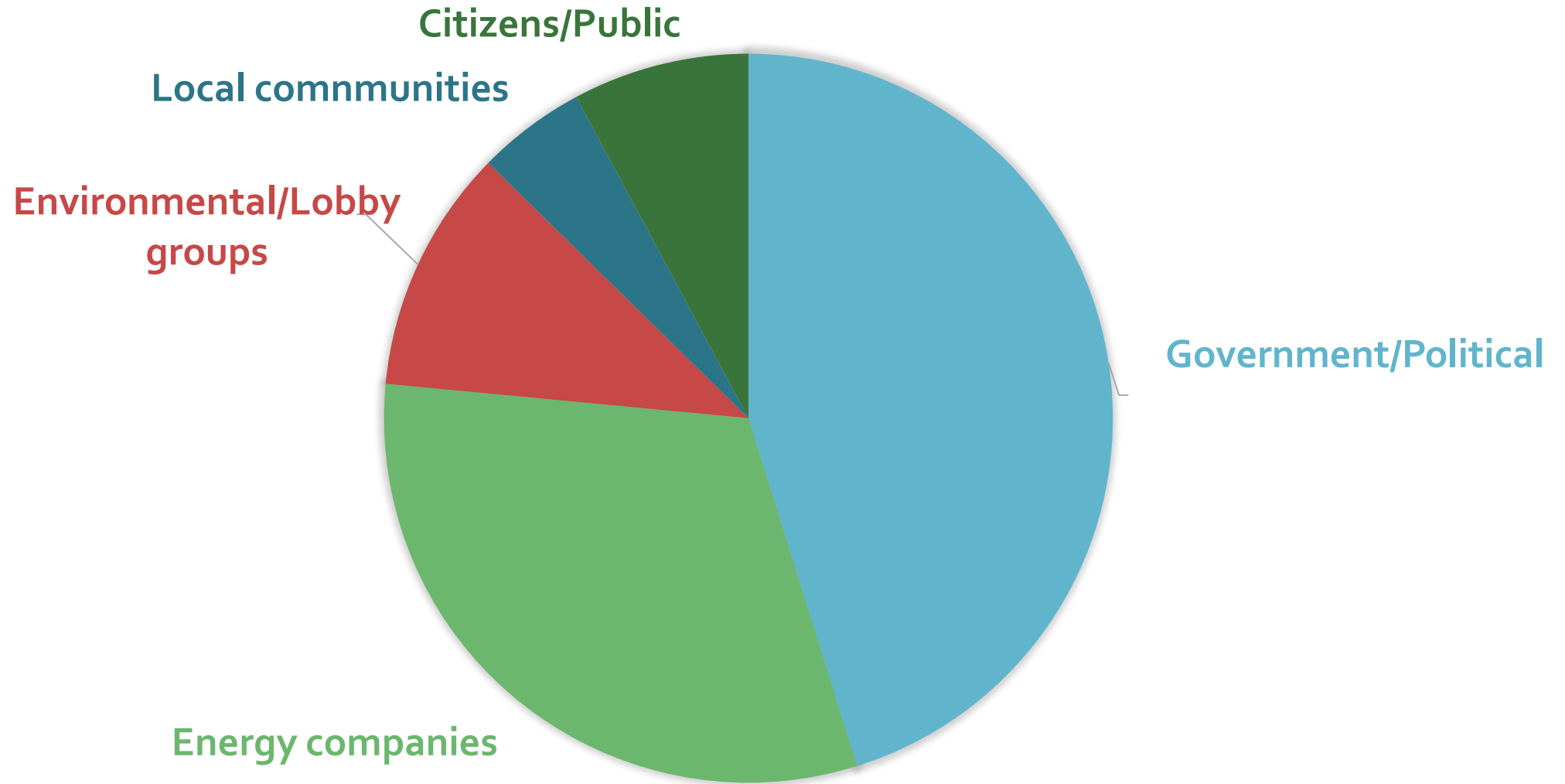
Scale of concern: local, national, global

(n.200, Nov 2007 - Jan 2008)



Issues of voice

(n.200, Nov 2007 - Jan 2008)



Conclusions

- Broad consensus amongst three key newspapers, but emphasise different issues;
- An inevitable dynamic nature of issues and coverage, key issues being:
 - Gradual increase of positive stories
 - Developer interests appear to dominate
 - Economic and national interests more commonly presented
 - Voices of protest register when influencing these dominant values
- No clear link between press coverage and 'acceptance', but can be seen in context of the transition of the Irish energy system.

Wind energy industry launches €500,000 ad campaign

Promotion is backed by semi-State bodies such as Coillte, Bord na Móna and the ESB

Mon, Jan 4, 2016, 01:00